

The Curse of Regicides :

O R

SIMEON and LEVI's Doom,

I N A

S E R M O N

Preached on the

Thirtieth of JANUARY, 17^{II}₁₂.

B E I N G

The Solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation for the Execrable Murder of CHARLES the Martyr, of Blessed Memory.

A T T H E

Parish-Church of St. ETHELBURGA.

By LUKE MILBOURNE, a Presbyter
of the Church of England.

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Genesis XLIX. 5, 6, 7.

meon and Levi are Brethren: Instruments of Cruelty are in their Habitations.

my Soul, come not thou into their Secret; unto their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united: for in their Anger they slew a Man, and in their Self-Will they digged down a Wall.

ursed be their Anger, for it was fierce; and their Wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

AS I am sure Christianity allows no Subjects to rebel against their lawful Princes, so I am sure those Englishmen are no true Christians who mourn not sincerely for that horrid Sin, which has almost defecrated this Day, the barbarous Murder of Charles the First, of Glorious Memory; the Effect of a Rebellion scarce to be parallel'd, for Wickedness, in all preceding Ages. The Sun it self never beheld an Action more deservedly accurst by all good Men, nor ever was a notorious and scandalous Villany slighted with that prodigious Impudence which this is, by some who pretend yet to the highest Advances in an unreprouable Holiness, We have Saints still who can look upon the Royal Martyr's Tomb without a Tear, and tho', upon the slightest Approach, that Sacred Body would bleed afresh, the Savage Murderers could view it with an unrelenting Eye, and only long to shew their unnatural Courage again on an agreeable Occasion. Fasting, Mourning, and Tears, give some Evidence of Repentance; an Abjuration of seditious and turbulent Principles would give Hopes of an Amendment coming on; but a Contempt of those Laws that enjoin it, a Re-assertion of those Principles upon which Men have sin'd; a Justification of Murder and Rebellion, by scorning to own it as a Sin; these things argue a stubborn Obstinacy, an open Defiance to Divine Justice, and a pertinacious Rejection of all the Laws of God and Man. From such Men Princes can be no longer safe than they have Strength enough to crush them; nay, Heaven it self would feel their Madness did not its Thunders fright and force them into Silence: Boldness and Impudence cannot alleviate a Crime, but aggravate it; nor can a stiff Denial of apparent Guilt avert God's Vengeance from Sinners: He may seem to take no Notice of Transgressors for a while; *The Wicked may prosper*; as *Jeremy expresses* Jerem. 12. *it, and they that deal treacherously may be happy: They may be planted so as to take Root; they may grow and bring forth Fruit; while God, tho' he be near in their Mouths is far from their Reins*; but howsoever the Methods of Divine Providence may be dark and obscure to Humane Eyes, Sin must be still Sin to us; we are to examine Actions by Divine Rules, and not to measure them by their Events, but by their Correspondence to those Rules; and, consequently, where we see a Rebel or a Murderer, we are to repute him such, and to condemn him as such, unless we our selves have a Desire to be Partakers of his Sin; no Friendship, Tenderness, Relation, can excuse us from this; since even Jacob himself a

Man eminent for Piety, and influenc'd by the Divine Spirit, when he call'd his Sons to bestow his Blessings upon them, could not spare *Simeon* and *Levi*, but repeated their Crime, express'd his Abhorrence of it, and gave them Reason to expect nothing but Judgments instead of Blessings for it; *Simeon and Levi are Brethren, &c.*

To understand which Words the better, we must look back into the Occasion of them; for we cannot reasonably believe that so tender a Father, as *Jacob* seems every where to be, would have given his Sons a Curse instead of a Blessing, unless he had had a very good Reason for so extraordinary an Action: The Occasion, then, was this:

Dinah, the Daughter of Jacob and Leah, when her Father liv'd at Shalem, goes out to see the Daughters of the Land, when Shechem, the Son of Hamor, a powerful Neighbour, meets with her, loves her, lies with her, and defiles her: no doubt Shechem was guilty of a very great Sin, both against God and against Jacob; but he endeavours to make the best Satisfaction for the Injury done that he could; his lawless Lust was converted to a regular and earnest Love; and therefore, by his Father's Mediation, he desires her in Marriage; the Violence and Reallity of his Passion appears in his Request;

Gen. 34. 1, 2. Let me find Grace in your Eyes, and what you shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much Dowry and Gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me; only give me the Damsel to Wife: But this earnest Affection was return'd by the Sons of Jacob with revengeful Treachery; no Repentance, no kind and humble Offers could atone their implacable Tempers; but, what render'd the Matter worse, they sacrific'd their Religion to their Malice, that very Ordinance which God had appointed them, as the Symbol of his Gracious Covenant, they converted into a Snare for those they hated; a thing which, as we may well conclude, so holy a Person as Jacob never suspected; and therefore might be mightily pleas'd to see his Sons so zealous for that Sacred Institution, besides, the very Danger of so desperate an Action as they were then contriving, might make him far from such a Thought: But tho' the Condition might have appear'd very harsh to an insincere Person, neither Shechem, nor Hamor, his Father, stumble at it: Circumcision seem'd a small Dowry for so great an Alliance as they apprehended that propounded to be, and their Influence prevail'd upon their Fellow-Citizens, all to embrace the same Terms of Union with the Family of Jacob. A fatal Condescension that! For, no sooner were they grown sore under that unhappy Ceremony, but these two Brethren, Simeon and Levi, as Ringleaders in the cruel Design, break in upon the disabled Citizens, and murder'd all the Males; and, with the Assistance of their Brethren, added Plunder and Ruin to their Murder, Spoiling the City taking their Sheep, their Oxen, and their Asses, the principal Riches of those Days, and that which was in the City, and that which was in the Field, and all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their Wives they took Captive, and spoiled even all that was in the House. No sooner

Verse 27, 28, 29.

sooner did Jacob hear of this bloody Execution, but he saw the Crime, and apprehended very well the Danger from thence threatening him and his. He was but a *Stranger* and a *Sojourner* in that Country, yet one who, with his Ancestors, had received extraordinary kindness from those very People; and what could the adjacent Towns conclude from so desperate an Action? What Measures must they expect from such treacherous Inmates? Such Falsehood was enough to make them all conspire together to the ruin of Jacob and his Family: This he tells his Sons in plain Terms, *Ye have troubled me to make me stink among the Inhabitants of the Land. And I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, and my House.* Verse 30. And this Expectation was so rational as nothing but God's extraordinary Providence could have prevented it; the Method of which we find in the beginning of the subsequent Chapter. This now was the Crime for which Jacob laid so heavy a Sentence upon his own Sons; and what was displeasing to God, could never be pardonable by Jacob, acted as at this time by a Prophetical Spirit, *Treachery and Cruelty*, especially when *weyl'd with the Preferences of Religion*, are odious both to God and Man.

The Meaning of the Words is obvious enough, only that Phrase, *In their self-will they digg'd down a Wall*, has admitted of some Variety of Interpretation. Your Margin read it, *In their self-will they houghed, or cut the Sinews of Oxen*; and so several Translations read it, and some give it this Meaning, That they murdered the *Princes of the People*, for *Oxen or Bulls*, in Scripture Language, frequently signify *Princes or great Men*. Take it which way we please, the History makes it so literally good, that we need no further Disquisition about it. I shall proceed to the Things most considerable in the Text, and they are,

1. A Description of these wicked Men concern'd, *Simeon and Levi are Brethren, Instruments of Cruelty are in their Habitation.*

2. The Patriarch's cautious Resolution, with respect to such dangerous Persons, *Oh, my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Assembly mine Honour be not thou united!*

3. The Reason given for this Caution; *For in their Anger they slew a Man, and in their self-will they digged down a Wall*; or murdered the *Princes of the People*.

4. You have the Sentence past upon their Wickedness, *Cursed be their Anger, for it was fierce; and their Wrath, for it was cruel.*

5. The Nature of that Curse laid upon them. Jacob here, as a Prophet, and in the Name of God himself, declares it, *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

1. Then we have the Description of these evil or wicked Men, *Simeon and Levi*, whom I call wicked, with respect to this particular Crime committed by them; tho, probably, they might afterwards be *Penitents*, if excellent Instructions and Examples could make them so; They were *Brethren, Instruments of Cruelty were in their Habitations*. It could be no Crime in these Two that they were *Brethren* only. *Reuben, and Judah, and Nephtali, and Zebulon*, were *Brethren*

too, yet that Relation not charged upon them as a Fault. But these were *Brethren in Iniquity*, Men who shew'd their mutual Kindness, principally in a malicious Confederacy against those who desired to be at Peace with them. *Simeon* seems more particularly, tho' not without the Consent of his present unhappy Partner, to have had a *natural Inclination to Blood and Cruelty*; they knew not how to shew Pity on their own Brother *Joseph*, whom they maliced for that Interest he had in his Father; and had not *Reuben* and *Judah* pittied his Innocence, his party-colour'd Coat should have been dipt in his own Blood, and not in that of a Kid: And *Gen. 42. 24.* *Joseph* seems to express a Remembrance of *Simeon's* Unkindness, when he pick'd out him among the rest to keep as Prisoner, and a Pledge for the Honesty of his Brethren: And that Prison he was then confin'd to might possibly have that good Effect on him, as to make him sensible of his Sin, not only against his Brother, but against his *well-meaning Neighbour*: Certainly it's a great Happiness to have Brethren, neer Relations, and real Friends to stand by us in Adversities or Troubles; Advice, Comfort, Sympathy, Assistance, are desirable Things, and from whom can we expect them more naturally and reasonably than from those who are bound to us in the nearest Ties of Blood? But it's an extreme Infelicity when those who should be Fellow-helpers to one another in that which is good, express their mutual Dearnesses only in the most criminal and desperate Actions. Men are too prone to Wickedness of themselves, they need no Helps nor Encouragements to it. And yet we frequently observe in this World's Course, that while *good Men* quarrel and contend one among another, those who are devoted to Wickedness are inseparable; so we see, when even *Abraham* and *Lot* could not live peaceably together, so as to contribute to each others Good; *Simeon* and *Levi* could concur and hold together in a Course of Cruelty; and when *Paul* and *Barnabas* could fall into such Heats, as to forsake one another, the malicious *Jews* could run in united Troops from Place to Place, to endeavour the Extirpation of the Gospel. Not to instance in any thing nearer Home, yet certainly Goodness and Virtue is of a more healing and uniting Nature in it self; and one would think that those Persons who agree heartily in one great and excellent End, the eternal Enjoyment of God, should agree among themselves; yet how many earnest Exhortations to Love and Peace has our Blessed Saviour, and his Holy Apostles, lost upon an obstinate World? What admirable Examples have they set before us, and all to no purpose? What strong Obligations to mutual Endearments do those common Calamities good Men struggle with in a wicked World, afford, and yet they seem to weak inconsiderate Flesh and Blood, only like *Sampson's Withs and Cords*, snapping as *Tom* when touch'd by Fire? But on the other Hand, the Wickedness makes *Isa. 9. 19.* Men Brutish, so that no Man can spare his Brother, tho' 20, 21. they snatch on the Right Hand and be hungry, and eat on the Left Hand and be not satisfied, tho' they eat every Man the Flesh of his own Arm; tho' *Manasseh* be against *Ephraim*, and *Ephraim*

Ephraim against Manasseh, yet they'll be both together against Judah. There is somewhat of the Coward in the most daring Villain, which makes him study the more earnestly to procure Confederates, he looks upon the whole prudent World as his Enemy, and knows not how to prevail against it, unless it be false to and betray it self; and therefore, he takes the greatest pains to joyn others in the same desperate Courses with himself, both that he may be the better able to master all expected Opposition; and that when other Means fail, the Number of the Criminals may procure Impunity; And it commonly appears, that the greatest Wickednesses make the strongest Combinations; so *Achitophel* understood it, and *Absalom* too, when he lay openly with his Fathers Concubines in the sight of all *Israel*, that so he and they being abhorred by *David*, might be the more unanimous and daring Rebels: The Persecution of that *Lamb of God*, The blessed *Jesus*, was Unjust and Cruel yet, that, when other Tryals were in Vain, could reconcile *Herod* and *Pilate*. But Instruments of Cruelty were in their Houses, the foregoing Story tells, they took their Swords, Weapons of excellent Use in the Hands of good Men; but dangerous in theirs who have lost their Understandings: Weapons so lawfull to be us'd, that our Saviour, when the time of his Passion drew nigh, advised those of his Disciples, who wanted them, to sell their Coats and to buy them: They are the Guard of Magistracy, and the Protectors of Justice; but as Fire and Water are commonly said to be, they are excellent Servants, but bad Masters, so are they. It was lawful, doubtless, for *Simeon* and *Levi* with their Swords to have oppos'd any invading Force, and to have defended themselves from the Insults of all Aggressors; but to draw them upon unsuspecting and disabled Men, those to whom all Courage and Strength was then unserviceable; to bath them in the Blood of those who desired their Friendship upon the severest Terms, this Practise anathematiz'd the Weapons, and made them deserve no better Name, than that of Instruments of Cruelty; these Men acted not as generous Enemies, but as Thieves and Robbers, the Common Nuyfance of Mankind; They who had no Authority to that purpose, took upon them the Office of Heaven, and they would repay Vengeance, and be the Judges of their own Wrongs, a Thing not reasonably allow'd to any; so that they who might have gain'd Honour in a just Cause, were now no better than Assassines or Murderers; But whither will not Passion and Fury draw inconsiderate Madmen? But by these Instruments of Cruelty are not only to be understood, the Weapons themselves, by which their Cruelties were committed; but those very private Counsels and Devices there framed for the Execution of so pernicious a Design; for tho' they seem not to have weigh'd every Circumstance very well, yet we cannot imagine them so rash, as not to concert some Measures among themselves to go thro' with their Project; their Revenge was not a sudden or accidental thought; but it was premeditated and malicious; it was not carried on only by two Men, tho' only two are mention'd, in the Text, as the Projectors and Caprains in the Action, but Servants and others of which those antient Patriarchs had abundance; and Si-

mean and Levi as Men of a forward and daring Courage, went before the rest to try the Probability of Success; and upon the Signal given, the rest of their Brethren presently joyn'd, ready to go thro' that Work, which had with so much Vigour been attempted; Counsels and Confederates were all so many Instruments of Cruelty, Means to carry on cruel and revengeful Designs; the first Mischief was form'd there, the Assistances engag'd, and where *Weapons of War* seem'd needless to poor and laborious Shepherds, they provided those instruments of Ruine for the purpose.

2. We are to observe *Jacob's cautious Resolution*, with respect to such dangerous and cruel Persons, *O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Assembly, mine Honour be not thou united*; It was not their *near Relation* to himself could make that pious and apprehensive Patriarch trust himself the sooner with them, they had shown their Inhumanity towards him, who desired to be, and towards him who really was their Brother, and who knew where such violent Passions might stop: Besides, *Jacob*, who understood very well, the damnable Nature of that Sin his Sons then lay under the Guilt of, and being himself wholly innocent of that Wickedness, leaves his Detestation of it open now to the whole World, equally trembling at the Horror of that Guilt, and the impendent Punishment; he would have all to understand, that he was so far from having any hand in such a crying Sin, that he would hold no Correspondence, no private Councils with those who had, tho' link'd to himself in the nearest Bonds of Relation and Affection: Partiality and Tenderness, it's true, are frequently the Occasions of Men over-looking the Faults of those who are near or dear to them; or it makes them apt, with aged *Eli*, to extenuate the most provoking Crimes, and to look upon, and to punish them, if in their Power, only as some trifling Pccadillo's; the Patriarch here, acts like a more *disinterested Judge*, like one whom no Favour or Affection could warp to Partiality; he sets forth their Crime in its genuine Ugliness; and, for his own part, washes his Hands from that innocent Blood which his Children had shed. He might perhaps, in these various Perplexities he had been engaged in, read some Characters of divine Displeasure, for his too much Lenity in this Case before; and, therefore, he's the more careful now to shake off any such Imputation, and to leave his Hatred to such a *Violation of the Rights of Hospitality* upon Record to all Posterity. *O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Assembly, mine Honour be not thou united*! *Jacob* seems in this Expression, to have been of the same Opinion with our own Law-makers, viz. That in Murder there are no Accessaries, but all Persons as well consenting, as contriving, are Principals, and obnoxious to the same Punishments; and therefore he'd have nothing to do in any of their Councils or Cabals: Wickedness is of an infectious Nature, few can touch such Pitch, and not be miserably defil'd by it; from which Consideration it is, that the Apostle advises us to shun every Appearance of Evil, least from an Indulgence of our selves in those things which have but an outward shew of Ill, we might come to an Approbation of Sin and Wickedness in all its Circumstances:

stances: Nothing has more fatal Influences upon easy Mankind, than *Ill-Company*; to follow the Multitude to do Evil, is almost as natural as for the Sparks to fly upward; they who roul down Hill, roul apace; the many Observations imprudent Men make upon the Events of Divine Providence, proves oft-times a very great Snare to them; which yet, if they were made impartially, would be of the greatest Advantage to them imaginable. Let there be 10000 Instances of dreadful Judgments falling upon wicked Men, which might startle others, yet they are all easily lost in one single Instance of successful Wickedness; so far are Men from taking warning by the Miseries of others, that they snatch at all the Advantages possible to encourage themselves to the same Unhappiness; and this is that which makes Men run so blindly into evil Society, and give up themselves to the Conduct of those who, perhaps, have nothing but a parcel of wild Lusts, and ungovernable Passions to serve; what Wretchedness the *Associating* our selves with such brings upon us, we may learn by the ordinary *Preludiums* of common Executions, and of natural Deaths; the common Thief and Murderer, when he comes to a serious Apprehension of that Eternity he's then entring upon, of that Guilt which he lies under, begins ordinarily his first Complaints from his being *seduced by ill-Company*, whose Persuasions and Suggestions he has been too weak to resist; as pious Souls blessed Angels rejoyce for the Conversion of one Sinner, so the infernal Spirits and ill-Men triumph as much in the final Destruction of one, who might once seem to have more honest Inclinations. It was this woful Condition of too too many which made Solomon take so much Pains dissuade all Men from accompanying with such: My Son, says he, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not; if they say, come with us, lets us Prov. 1. lay wait for Blood, let us lurk privily for the Innocent without a 10, 20. Cause, let us swallow them up alive as the Grave, and whole as those that go down into the Pit, we shall find all precious Substance, we shall fill our Houses with Spoil; cast in thy Lot among us, let us all have one Purse. My Son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy Foot from their Path. He would not have us yield to all their crafty or seemingly profitable Insuations, to have any Concerns with them: For their Feet run to Evil, and make hast to shed Blood, and they lay wait for their own Blood, they lurk privily for their own Lives: Thus we find others, when they come to lye upon their Death-beds, and are to employ their languishing Hours in making their Peace, and reconciling themselves to their God; their common Reflections are upon that ill-Company they have formerly delighted in; upon those frequent Advices they have receiv'd from kind Friends, to avoid such pernicious Societies; and the sad Predictions of the Event which they had formerly heard, and nothing is more frequent than their Resolutions, If God would but once again restore them to Health, that they would never hold Correspondence with such desperate Companions again: And certainly it's impossible, that a dying Man, whose Apprehensions are yet generally very sharp in such Cases, should think worse of such Companie than they deserve. But why should not these things

be seriously reflected on, as well while we are in Health and Vigour, as when Death looks us in the Face? Why should we, as we too often do, delay the *bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance*, till it be too late? There are some prevailing Sons, which are of a *Damning*, yet seemingly of a *Sociable* Nature, which Sociability rises not out of any mutual Endearments there are between Man and Man in them, but out of a Principle of Baseness and Cowardise; so the Drunkard gets Companions in his Sottishness to be his Security, not only from *doing*, but from *receiving* Mischief. The Thief is afraid of being surpriz'd in his nocturnal Enterprizes, and therefore endeavours to secure a good Assistance for the carrying on his Robbery, in spite of Oppolition. The Rebel gets as many Confederates as possible, that he may be able to beat down all Resistance the better, and if his Attempts fail, that he may either suffer with, or make his Escape among the Throng. And the Murderer, as we learn from the Text, must have his Cabals, his private Assemblies, and Partners, and tries to draw in store of Accomplices, that the Designs of Cruelty may proceed the better, and that the Greatness of the Number may out face the Revenge of Justice; but he's a wise Man who keeps himself out of all such hellish Combinations; he not only secures himself from common Troubles and Disquiets in this World, but can with the greater Ease make up his Accounts for the future. It's no uncommon thing for *Innocence* to suffer, when found *unwittingly* among those who are *notoriously guilty*; and if Innocence it self can scarce escape, what must a *Fraternity* or *Kindred in Iniquity* expect to suffer? As a Man would keep his Treasures from the Thief, his Children from the Gibbet, his Wife from the Adulterer, so he would keep any thing that's dear or valuable with him from all Concernments with those that are engaged in wicked Purposes. Nothing can be dearer to a Man than his Honour, than his precious and immortal Soul, nothing looks more terribly than a continual Disgrace, and than everlasting Damnation. *Jacob* therefore resolves to secure both his Soul and his Honour in the present Case; he would not have his Honour, his Fame, and Reputation to suffer in their scandalous Crime; he would not be imagin'd to stand upon the same Foundations, to entertain the same Principles, to carry on the same barbarous Actions with his degenerate Offspring; nor would he have his Soul come into their Secret; he desier'd so exact an Innocence as he would not so much as dive into the horrid Depths of their Villainy; he look'd upon their Principles and Motives as abominable and odious both to God and Man, such as a Man could not reflect on or be inquisitive after without Horror and Extremity of Danger. It was a deep, a grievous Wound to *Jacob's* pious Soul, to have such Barbarity justly charg'd upon his Family, such a Crime as Heathens would have been afraid of, committed by those who were under the more immediate Influences of the only true God; it would have been a Grief to his Spirits to have seen Strangers, nay Enemies, to have shewn such unmerciful Severity; but when his own Sons, the continual Subjects of his heavenly Instructions and of his devoutest Prayers, those who shar'd his very Soul among

them, whose Good he desired and ambition'd more than his own, when they fell under so heinous a Guilt, how could his aged Spirits support the vast Affliction? Only Parents, and those the kindest too, can be sensible of the yerning of their Bowels, their continual Fears, Doubts, Hopes, Perplexities for their Children. If *Apelles* were fain to veil *Agamemnon's* Face to represent that Grief he was in for the Loss of his dear *Iphigenia*, how would he express the Passion of a religious Father, when with open Eyes looking on his only Son precipitated into eternal and irremediable Woes! It made his Brother *Esaú* weep, nay, weep bitterly, when he lost his Father *Isaac's* Blessing; tho' he's generally represented as none of the most scrupulous Religionists: And must it not cut *Jacob* to the very Heart, when he was bestowing his effectual Blessings upon all his other Children, to pour down only Curses upon these? Yet it was impossible for him to do otherwise, God guided his Hands and his Tongue too, and made every Word he utter'd propheticall. Nor could the dreadful Weight of this paternal Curse be easily supportable by the two Brethren, if at least they had any true sense of the Greatness of their Sin; even *Cain*, when he was to be a Vagabond upon Earth, because of the Murder of his innocent Brother, could cry out, *His Punishment was greater than he could bear*; and these, whose Judgment was not extremely different, could not but tremble under the Apprehensions of divine Wrath, especially, when their Father was the Messenger to denounce it,

That their Sister *Dinah* should have been us'd as a Harlot, was certainly a great Affliction to *Jacob*, as well as to his Sons; *Shechem's* Actions and *Dinah's* Consent were both very great Sins against God; but these furious Brethren seem not so much concern'd for the Honour of God as for their own; and therefore, like the Practitioners of Villainies in general, they make use of Religion for a Cloak for their cruel Revenge; they were for making Converts to their own Profession, as a neighbouring Monarch makes them to Popery, so as they should be sure never to return to Paganism again, unless it were in another World. Religion, the most excellent thing in the World, has yet, in all Ages, been abus'd, to make way for the greatest Villainies: It was that which made the Jews crucify their Saviour; they had a Religion settled among them by God himself, in an extraordinary manner; and he came, as they suppos'd, to ruine it, therefore it was fit that he should be cut off. This made them persecute the Apostles afterwards, because those Laws and Customs which *Moses* had bequeathed to them were in danger of being evacuated by their Doctrines; and heathen Emperours were as zealous for their Idolatry, and therefore, for several Ages, persecuted Christianity with the greatest Earnestness as an Enemy to their fantastic Deities; it was this that arm'd out the bloody Croisades against the poor *Albigenses* and *Waldenses* of old, only because they dar'd to prejudice that Craft by which the Roman Clergy enslav'd the Western World, by reviving lost Truth, and preaching the Gospel sincerely in the midst of Darkness and Superstition; it was this which gave Being to the holy League in France, and to the Parisian Massacre, to that execrable Rebellion in Ireland, and to that damnable

and damning Covenant in England and Scotland, which blew up and maintain'd the Flames of an unnatural Rebellion in these Nations, effected that unparallel'd Murder upon the best of Kings, involv'd all in Blood an Confusion, and flew out into those extravagant Impieties, the dismal Effects of which we feel to this day, and shall be more sensible of hereafter; the Stains of Royal Blood are not easily wip'd out; nor is the Forbearance of earthly Punishments a full Acquittance from Heaven for the Guilty; divine Vengeance oft moves in secret and untrodden Ways, and when Men cry *Peace, Peace*, to themselves, and hug themselves in the midst of external seeming Blessings, the dreadful Clouds break over their Heads, burden'd only with temporal and with eternal Plagues. It may seem strange, that since every one is very sensible of the Corruption and Degeneracy of the World, yet wicked Designs should be forced to seek Corners, and to shelter themselves in obscure Cabals; but *Sin* always makes the *Sinner* timorous, and tho' it has so many private Allurements to bewitch Men into Slavery with, yet when seen in publick, it's accompany'd with so many Deformities, that some or other will startle at it; therefore *evil Actions* are call'd *the Works of Darknes*; they hate all Means of Discovery; God infatuates those who are wicked, so that tho' they aim all at one thing, yet they insist in different and irreconcilable Methods, so that they keep a jealous and watchful Eye upon one another; whereas, should they but once joyn in Councils as they do in Intentions, it were impossible Goodness should find any Place in the World. It was the Ruine of *Babel*, that tho' all the Multitude intended to go on with that stupendous Structure, they could not yet understand one another's Meaning; it's the Ruine generally of wicked Conspiracies, that tho' great Numbers wish for and would gladly advance the same Mischiefs, yet their Capacities are various, their Conclusions rash, and therefore their Practices frequently ineffectual: But sometimes God permits them to take place; he punish'd his People *Israel*, when rebellious by their adjacent Neighbours, and afterwards by the *Chaldeans*, yet when he had done, he threw those Rods he had lash'd his People with into the Fire of his Anger; he made use of *Simeon* and *Levi* to punish *Shechem's* Fornication; but it seems he would not hold the Executioners of his Indignation guiltless; humane Passions, when they are concern'd in dispensing divine Judgments, boyl over too much, and fly far beyond those Bounds they ought to prescribe to themselves; and therefore, tho' Heat and Carelesness might sometimes be pleaded in Vindication of Cruelty, God often punishes, both the Unjustice, and the Cause of it; both the *Fury of the Oppressor*, and the Irregularity of that Fury: As God is a God of Mercy himself, so he loves to see his own Goodness shadow'd out in the Placability and Gentleness of Men one towards another; *Vengeance is his own, and he will repay it*; he leaves it not to Men to proportion it out as they please: For those who fear God to think such Impieties as others act is a Fault, to enquire after them is sinfull, to be privy to them, or consenting with them is hatefull, but to be united with them is damnable; farewell all true Religion, farewell all

Preterences to Goodness, when Fire and Water, Light and Darkness,
 Hell and Heaven come to a Coalition; God cannot endure it, that
 those, who are his own peculiar Servants, should enter into Con-
 federacy or Relation with his Enemies: It was a just Judgment,
 therefore, upon Wise *Solomon*, that he was so far left to himself,
 as to be tempted to Idolatry, when he took to himself so many
 Pagan Wives and Concubines, that he might see and know what
 mighty Temptations, by those Means, he expos'd himself to. *Je-*
hoshaphat a great and Religious Prince of his Line, found the same
 Mischiefs from a parallel Practice, his friendly visit to *Idolatrous*
Ahab, engaged him in a join'd Expedition against *Ra-*
moth Gilcad, and he had lost his Life in the Field for 2 Chron.
 his Pains, had not God's extraordinary Providence in- 18. 31.
 terpos'd; and when the same *Jehoshaphat* had join'd in
 Affinity with *Ahaziah*, King of *Israel*, who did very wickedly, and
 join'd his Ships with his to go to *Tarshish*, God gave him warning
 of his Displeasure, by the Prophet *Eliczer*, and according
 to his Prediction, the Ships were wreck'd in *Ezion-gaber*, 2 Chron.
 the very Port from whence they were launch'd; By 20. 36, 37.
 which cross *Jehoshaphat* stood corrected; And when *Aha-*
ziah moved it the Second Time, that his Servants might 1 Kings
 go with the Servants of *Jehoshaphat* in the Ships, he would 22. 49.
 not; he had seen how averse the Lord was to such
 Unions, and he resolv'd to tempt his Displeasure no farther. *Cur-*
tius tells us, of a certain *Indian* Prince, who being afraid of *Alex-*
ander's Arms, sent to him a Virgin, who had been fed so continu-
 ally with Poyson, that it was concluded, her very Complexion
 would be fatal to him if he kept any Company with her; Wicked-
 ness certainly has a much more Malignant Nature; and he who
 has any thing to do with those that are Wicked, feels it in every
 Thing; such Thoughts made the Apostles, when he advis'd his
Ephesians to walk as the Children of Light, to persuade them to have no
 Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness; but rather
 to reprove them; because it was a shame to speak of those Things Eph. 5.
 which were done by them in Secret. — Such Secret Wickedness 11, 12.
 these Sons of *Jacob* had been concern'd in, where their
 Father would not have his Soul to come. That Rage of theirs
 which had had so sudden and bloody Effects might proceed fur-
 ther; and who knew but those who had so grossly broken the
 Bonds of Hospitality, might, upon a suitable Provocation, fly out
 against their aged Father too. *Jacob* was sensible of what Danger
 he was in from such cruel and violent Men, and what Dangers
 they had engaged him in among his Neighbours. He saw very
 well, that nothing but the Divine Protection could have preserv'd
 him from such ambiguous Dangers, but he could not but hate that
 Wickedness still, which had threatned him so much of old. He,
 who had been an Eye-witness of the Boldness of these Sons of his,
 had much Reason to suspect that all their Consultations might be
 as Sanguinary; and that these who had broken one acknowledg'd
 Command of God, would be improving still, and acquire Auda-
 city enough to attempt the rest; Should he have div'd into their
 Councils,

Councils, and have been concern'd with them, as it would have contracted a Guilt to him, and have laid him under the same Hate and Scandal they had been obnoxious to, so it would have been an Encouragement to them to have attempted the like Executions upon the same, or less Occasions, for the future; nothing flushes ill Men more than a Confluence of others. *Abigail* had, perhaps, never been a Rebel, had not the easy and floating Vulgar shew'd themselves ready to follow in his most desperate Enterprizes. If *Jacob* were so exact, even with those that were his own Flesh and Blood, he should be an Example to us, to express a compleat Detestation of equal Cruelties, and of the Actors in them. *St. Paul*, when he had reckoned up a great many sorts of notorious

Sinners, advises the *Corinthians*, *Not so much as to eat with such a one*, who was guilty of any of those Crimes, *1 Cor. 5. 11.*

And when he had given the *Thessalonians* several excellent Counsels in his Epistle to them, he superadds this Order, *2 Thess. 3. 14.* *If any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him: And the reason of that Charge is,—That he may be ashamed: When Men*

upon their Engagement in wicked Practices, find themselves deserted, and left to struggle by themselves with all those Inconveniences attending a Singularity in Villany; it strikes them at once with Shame and Terror, and many times brings them from a serious Sense of their desperate Condition, to as serious an Amendment of Life. There's generally too great a Lenity in Men in these respects; and tho' they see others guilty of never so enormous Crimes, they are willing the Punishment should fall upon few, but the Terror of it spread to the rest; yet, even this, considering the common Frailties of humane Nature, may be excused; but there seems to be a great deal of Difference between a Remission of Punishment, and a Reingratiating our selves with the Criminal. He who has been a Thief, tho' he have escap'd the Fate frequently attending such, yet can scarce expect a Blessing on what he has got by Violence; nor can they look for less than a Participation in his Curse, who are concern'd with him in temporal Affairs. It was not *Lot's* personal Righteousness could exempt him from his share in suffering, when he liv'd and traffiqued with the wicked *Sodomites*. He, who has been a Murderer, or a Rebel, may no doubt, grow a serious Penitent, and a loyal Subject; but he must first abjure those Principles upon which he acted at first, otherwise the same Principles will, always, upon fair Opportunities, exert themselves in the same or equivalent Practices; when such Tenets are not renounced or detested, Vengeance certainly treads upon the Heels of such Persons; and all those who have any Interests with such, must expect to be Sharers in their Misfortunes. When the Angel in the *Apocalypse* warns God's People to come out of *Babylon*, he gives this Reason for it; *Come out of her my People, that ye be not Partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her Plagues.*

From which it is plain, that if God's

People should continue in such a cursed Society, they must expect all those Judgments incident to such: It's extream Weakness

Weakness in any to imagine that Evil-doers themselves, Men of murderous and rebellious Principles, should escape the Wrath of God; the Apostle gives us a good Lesson.—*Let no Man deceive you with vain Words, for because of these things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience; Therefore be not ye Partakers with them.* A ruddy Countenance is not always an Evidence of an healthful Constitution. It's an odd Wish, and a dreadful Curse, I'm sure, which David lays upon some of his Enemies; *Let their Table become a Snare before them, and that which should have been for their Well-fare, let it become a Trap:* And it's a Curse made good abundantly upon many of those, who seem to bid fair for a continual Impunity. When we look upon that Sacred Blood which was Shed this Day by the Hands of barbarous Rebels; When we consider that Blood, as that of righteous Abel, crying to Heaven for Vengeance; When we have known such Miscreants as have repeated that Wish of the desperate Jews, with Relation to their Eternal King; *His Blood be upon us, and upon our Children*, recognizing the Murder of their Pious Sovereign with a triumphant Scorne; when we remember that Religion was made the Stale to draw Men into the Snare of Rebellion, and Faith was converted into Faction, what Cruelty and Inhumanity was exprest to God's Representative, by his own natural Subjects; *What Numbers contributed to that horrid Sin? How few have suffered by humane Law; And, how few have endeavour'd by Fasting and Prayer, and hearty Grief, to reingratiate themselves with Heaven; we must be very unreasonably confident, if we imagine such can always escape the Strokes of Heaven; the Contrivers, the Aletors, the Executioners, the Defenders, of that bloody Villany, are all Brethren, Instruments of Cruelty are in their Houses: O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret; and to their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united!* And this brings me to the Third Particular in the Text.

Ephes. 5.
6, 7.

Psal. 69.
22.

3. The Reason of Jacob's cautious Resolution against having any concern with these cruel Sons of his; it was, *because in their Anger they slew a Man, and in their Self-will they digg'd down a Wall, or destroy'd the Princes of the People:* Here we see that of St. James verifi'd; *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God:* There may be an Anger without Sin, but it must only be against Sin; but even that grows sinful, when it extends to Murder. Phinehas himself, had he not, besides his Office, had an extraordinary Motive to that purpose, could not have been excused for the killing Zimri and Cosbi: If Men be never so guilty, yet private Persons are no fit Judges of their Demerits; and these unhappy Brethren were only in such a private Station, they were Parties, and therefore could not be Judges in their own Cause; we see our National Laws proceed according to this Supposition; tho' a Man be condemn'd to die as a Traytor, tho' the Day of his Execution be prefix'd by the Judge, yet should any one Kill him, between the time of Sentence and Execution, nay, if it were at the very Block or Gibbet, the Person killing him, would be a Murderer in the Eye of the Law, and liable to Death for his Extravagance; and

and our *National Laws* in this Matter, are but agreeable to the *Laws of Nature*, which permits no such kind of Savageness among its Subjects, till it's fallen strangely from its self. But Anger seldom considers these things; he who has a revengeful Soul, looks over all the Barricadoes of Sense and Reason, and can be content, with *faux*, to set fire to the Train, tho' he's sure to be blown up with it himself. The Sons of *Jacob* were not educated at the rate of the rest of the Pagan World, they had the Instructions and Examples of a pious Grand-father and Father, always before their Eyes; they were taught to know the True God, and their own Duties to him, as such: Tho' the Law was not yet so punctually given, as it was afterwards by *Moses*, yet that was publick enough, and could not but come under their Cognizance; *whosoever sheds Mans Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed*; Parents, in those Days, had the Power of Life and Death in their own Hands, as may be concluded from *Judah's* Sentence upon his Daughter-in-Law *Tamar*; when he was inform'd of her playing the Harlot, *bring her out*, says he, *and let her be burnt*, which was like the Decree of an arbitrary Judge; but they consider'd not what Authority their religious Father might make use of, to punish such bold Assassines: The neighbouring People could not but look upon so desperate an Action, as a leading Case, and begin to consider among themselves, that, upon the least Affront given, their own several Turns might be the next; but these *booby-headed Bravoes*, never consider'd what Force they had to oppose such combining Nations: They could not but have been instructed so far in the Nature of that God they worship'd, as to know that he was gentle, merciful, long-suffering; and of great Goodness; it can scarce be thought they had not heard of God's Discourse with and Condescensions to, the Intercessions of their Grand-father *Abraham*, where he declar'd, *That for the sake of ten Righteous, he would have spared all the Cities of the Plain*; and their Father could not but have told them what great things God had done for himself when driven from his Fathers House, for fear of his angry Brother; these Informations could not but have fix'd a very kind Idea of God in their Minds, from all which, if they had but given their Passions leave to coole a little, they would easily have concluded so Cruel an Action must have been very disagreeable to so infinite a Goodness and Placability, but they never consider'd how far they might, by such an Action, Sin against God, what Vengeance by such a Sin, they might bring upon themselves and their Posterity; they never consider'd how much greater the Punishment they intended was, than the Offence which *Shechem* had committed, nor in how direct an Opposition they acted to Almighty God when, for the sake of one, and only one, who was Guilty, they destroy'd and enslav'd so many Innocents; they seem'd to have design'd a Revenge as bitter against their Souls, as against their Bodies, to destroy them by such a Surprise, when they were suffering all that possibly they could, to create a mutual Peace and confidence between them. Oh, should but Almighty God take the Measures of his Revenge from the Practices of Men, one

wards another, what Miseries must wretched Mankind be universally involv'd in ; But *his Mercy is Great, for which he is to be feared*, while the *tender Mercies of the Wicked, are Cruelty*: There was somewhat of Deliberation in their Anger, it blinded not their Minds so, but they could express a deal of malicious Cunning, proposing such Conditions to veil their Anger, as might prevent all Suspensions in their aged Father, as well in those they hated. Who could have dream'd that the Seal of God's Love to them, should have been perverted into a Sacrament of Revenge ? But what will not Men misled by Fury venture at ? These had *let the Sun go down upon their Wrath* more than once, it might be sometime before *Hamor and Shechem*, could prevail upon their Citizens, to buy an Alliance with *Israel*, at so dear a rate ; it was *three Days* after the Condition perform'd that they set upon their devilish Work, so that it seems all the time of their Delay did but whet their Appetites to Blood ; and all the Condescensions on the other side, did but increase their daring Insolence ; so dangerous it is to bow to those whose Pride and Madness is the only measure of their Actions.

As their Anger was devilish in its Intention, so it was very monstrous in its Object ; if, according to our ordinary Translation, *they dig'd down a Wall in their self-will* ; if they acted like common Thieves and Robbers against those who were at Peace with them, and broke through that Security which every Man's House ought to give him against his malicious Neighbours, it argued a strange Inveteracy and Obstinacy in their Rage, that they would execute it against dead and insensible Walls, and that they were resolv'd no Obstacle should be powerful enough to retard their Fury. An open Enemy who had proclaim'd War against them, and made a publick Invasion upon them, could have express'd no more Barbarity ; but they were not Walls they fought with, nor mean Things with which they contended for. But *in their Anger they slew a Man, a Prince*, the Head of his People, a neighbouring Governor, under whose Protection it was, in some measure, that they liv'd, whose Friendship had been a Screen for them against any envious Designs of the Petty-Princes round about, who might have expected the better Dealings because of those Obligations their Predecessors had laid upon *Abraham* ; but neither the Tyes of Hospitality, nor the sacred Nature of Government, could secure those, whom Religion it self made an insufficient Plea for : As these ill Actions were done in *Anger*, so they express'd a great deal of *Self-will*, which seems to imply, that they had met with some who would have dissuaded them from so villainous a Tragedy ; and indeed, we find in the sacred Story, some Footsteps of greater Lenity in *Reuben*, and in *Judah* ; they seem to have been more tender hearted, and not inclin'd to Blood and Murder, and perhaps, *Jacob* himself, when he told them of the Dishonour of their Sister, had yet used some Means to allay those sudden Passions which such an Accident might excite in vigorous young Men. But all such Remonstrances were in vain, no Lenitives could abate the edge of their Fury, but they resolve on *Revenge*, let what would happen ; they *defy the Displeasure of God and Man*, provided they might but accomplish their wicked Purpose ;

nor would a mean Sacrifice atone their Fury, only Princes, the Princes of the People were Sacrifices fit for such Molochs; it might be some Confidence of his own Power that might encourage Schechem to that Sin he had lately committed, and the Punishment inflicted on him might be but Just, with relation to his Trespas; nor could the ungovernable Violence of lustful Passions excuse him; but Superior Power ought to have been Sacred in the Eyes of others. A base and treacherous Enemy, is an object of universal Fear and Hate, but a Rebellious Subject or a Traytor, mask'd under the Vizard of one who pretends to seek Protection, is never to be mention'd but with the utmost Execrations: If that sacred Character which Princes bear, cannot protect them from Violence, what private Person can expect to be safe? If we lay this Particular with Jacob's precedent Caution, Solomon's Direction seems but a Deduction from it, *My Son fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.* Wise Men will avoid the Conversation of the Wicked, and those who fear God, shall escape their Snares; Princes as they are seated in a sublime Place, so have they a great many Enemies; and wicked Men, who have a constant Terror upon their Spirits, by reason of that Authority which is in their Hands to punish their Crimes, are ready to watch all Opportunities for their Ruin; and this is one great Original of Rebellions in the World; and too many Men are so simple, as to imagine themselves extremely happy when they can have their Hands in the Dethroning or Humbling their Princes, when in the meantime, they only take a great deal of Delight and Pains in procuring their own Misery. If there were any one stroke of Mercy in this Action of Simeon and Levi, it was in that they destroy'd all the Males in the City, that they might not live to see the Misery of those who want a Governor; those Calamities which attend a Political Body when it wants a Head, are such as none can well judge of, but those who have been Eye-Witnesses of such Revolutions; what should we reflect upon those great Misfortunes which follow'd the People, *when there was no King in Israel, but every Man did that which was good in his own Eyes*: It was not the immediate Presence of God among them, nor the oracular Determination of rising Contests by the Priests Urim and Thummim, that could prevent Disorders among them; many were the Troubles that Nation was distracted with, any of which, where they stand upon Record in Holy Writ, carry that Remark along with them, that *in those days there was no King in Israel*: But it's enough for us to look at Home, where our National Miseries, after the breach of Allegiance, and especially after the Murder of God's anointed, were beyond the power of History to relate; but if Oppression, Plundering, Sacrilege, Heresies, Murders, and all manner of Injustice, were things hard to bear, these wretched Kingdoms had no ordinary share in them; no, the very Dregs of the Cup of God's Anger were forced upon them; what larger Bodies do, the same Perplexities smaller Societies feel in a deprivation of their Superiors, when the Sheepheard whether Spiritual or Temporal, is smitten, the poor Sheep must of consequence, be scatter'd; but it was a sure Antidote, which these

Sons of *Jacob* made use of, to destroy at once, both the Shepherd and the Sheep. When *Jacob* had formerly reprov'd them for this Fact, they answer'd him furlily, *Should he deal with our Sister, as with an Harlot?* a poor Satisfaction for so execrable a Crime, and they who had shewn so little sense of their Sin, then when it was so newly done, the Blood of Innocents still reeking upon their Hands, might have imagin'd, that both God and Man had forgotten that ever such a thing was done; But *Jacob* was here God's Minister, to assure them the contrary, and he their Father was employ'd to thunder Vengeance in their Ears, tho' the Disappointment was grievous to them, to receive a Curse in lieu of a Blessing, as it was to *Shechem* before, to receive a Dagger instead of a Wife into his Bosome, yet even in this dealing, God shew'd somewhat of Mercy to them; he would not let Sin rest upon them without Reproof, be denounc'd Judgment, that it might make them penitent, and endeavour to expiate that Blood-Guiltiness they were polluted with; and the Sentence was not so fatal, but a sincere Repentance might in some Measure reverse it; it was a merciful Severity too to others, that they hearing how heavy a Doom a Father had denounc'd against his own wicked Sons, might hear and fear, and do no more such Wickedness. It's the use the Prophet prescribes in the Case, That when the Judgments of God, whether in Sentence or Execution, are upon the Earth, then the Inhabitants of the Earth should learn Righteousness; those who might have flatter'd themselves with hopes of Impunity under equal Guilt, with that of *Simson* and *Levi*, would now be convinc'd of their foul Mistake, and labour to live holily and peaceably, as they implored a Blessing from God: Our care ought to be too with *Jacob*, to have nothing to do, to hold no Communication with those Brethren in Iniquity, whose Habitations are full of Instruments of Cruelty, who in their Self-wil'd Anger can oppose or murder Princes.

4. We are to observe the Sentence it self past, against these Criminals, Cursed be their Anger, for it was fierce, and their Wrath, for it was cruel; he who observes that Duty of Charity, so frequently urged in the Gospel, and finds Love and Meekness every where commended there, who hears our Blessed Saviour at his Crucifixion, praying for his Enemies, and before it, doing a Miracle for the good of an Enemy, who sees St. Stephen following the same admirable Pattern, and meets with those Rules, That we should love our Enemies, bless them who curse us, pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us; That we should not be overcome with Evil, but overcome Evil with Good. And, therefore, if an Enemy thirst, give him Drink, if he hunger give him Meat, &c. He who reads these Things will perhaps think it difficult, to reconcile this and a great many more Curses in the Old Testament, with these Evangelical Prescriptions; and yet, if he compare well the Woes denounc'd by our Lord himself, who certainly was essential Love and Meekness, against the hypocritical Scribes and Pharises, with those Curses against wicked men us'd by *David*, and the Prophets, will find them all of the same Nature, and founded upon the same Reasons; and he who sees how God seconded the Curses of his Servants, by a speedy

and proportionable Demission of Vengeance upon the Guilty, most of necessity conclude these Things in some Cases lawful: So when *Elijah's Curse brought down Fire from Heaven upon the Two Captains and their Companies*; when *Elisba curs'd the Children of Bethel*, and *Two and Forty of them* were immediately torn by Bears, when *Josuah laid that Prophetical Curse upon the Rebuilders of Jericho*, which was made good upon *Hiel* some Hundreds of Years afterwards; all these were so many Attestations given by Heaven to the Justice of those dreadful Imprecations: Indeed, Curses against Men, in Scripture, are generally made with that Reserve, that *Prophetical Denunciations* against Cities and Countries are; they are to take place, unless a serious Repentance Intervene. — *The causeless Curse shall not come*; but woe to those whom, as in the Case of *Meroz*, the Angel of the Lord commands us to curse; there may some extraordinary Cases happen, wherein Vengeance makes no such Delays, but seizes the Guilty immediately; for God, who knows the Demerits of those Persons, whom he would have curs'd, best knows how to proportion his Dispensations towards them; God cannot be cruel or unjust; but, with Men, if that Condition of Impenitence be not understood, the Curse it self is sinful, and returns, at least, in part, upon the Heads of those who bestow it: And thus *Excommunication*, that *Ecclesiastical Curse*, is laid on with that Design, that the *Flesh may be humbled, but that the Soul may be saved in the Day of Jesus*; and thus *Jacob* here cannot be suppos'd to have wish'd or intended, both the *Temporal Punishment*, and the *Eternal Damnation* of his own Children; no, we cannot doubt, but that he put up frequent Supplications to the God of his Fathers, to divert his eternal Judgments from the Heads of his Sons and their Posterity; but yet, that their Errors might be Warnings to others, he performs his Duty, and lays upon them *an effectual Curse* for that bloody Sin they had been guilty of; and it was but reasonable, that such abominable Crimes should lie under the severest Curses, as well explicite as implicite; God hates such Actions, and all his faithfull People must hate them too; God's Curse ever attends them, and the Curses of his Servants cannot but follow them; and I think none can doubt, but that we may curse bitterly the Crime committed, when we heartily desire, and endeavour the eternal Happiness of the Criminal. That Men extremely obliged in many Things, Men who pretended to *true Religion*, and a great Zeal to prosecute its Rules, and to promote its Influences, that such Men should trapan their Neighbours into a Disability to help themselves, that they should abuse them with all the fair Overtures of Peace and Kindness, only to lull them into an unsuspecting Security; That at last, when they had so laid them asleep, under a deep Insensibility of Danger, they should, upon the sudden break in upon and murder them, not only him who had given the Offence, but all the rest of his Cityzens, was a piece of Villany, which the yet callow World had given no Example of: This Action was *Original* in its time, and might have continu'd so still, had Men been but a little more ambitious to imitate and outdoe the Excellencies than the impieties of their Predecessors; their Anger was

ill grounded, fierce, rash, violent, implacable ; their Wrath was cruel, bloody, helishly malicious and inexorable ; who could hear it without Trembling, or consider it without Horror ? What would the adjacent Countries think of that Religion professed by Jacob, when such flagitious Crimes were committed under the Umbrage of it ? True Religion was of the same Nature, and carry'd on the same Designs of Old, as it does now. St. James's heavenly Wisdom was always the same, and that was *pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy, full of Mercy and good Works : And the Fruits of Righteousness were always own in Peace, by them that made Peace ;* but might Men in those Days well argue, Is this that Piety, that acquaintance with the supreme God, which these mischeivous Wretches boast of ? Did their God, as they say, carry them under the Security of his own immediate Protection from place to place, and bring their Ancestors at first from *Ur of the Chaldees*, as a Place too filthy for so pure a Generation, only, that under such fine Pretexts, they might have the fairer Opportunity to carry Murder and Desolation wheresoever they went ? Did we for this End, hug these Vipers in our Bosomes, warm them with our free and undeserv'd Kindnesses ; and fancy our selves happy in the Society of those who seem'd so highly in the favour of the Almighty, only, that they might sting us to Death ? Certainly, we who want those *Illuminations and Communion*s which they boast of, have yet very different and more suitable Apprehensions of the great Creator all Things ; and who would ever be so mad as to embrace that Religion, which renders Men as Dogs, Bears, Wolves, nay Devils one to another ; such very well, or to such purpose, might the Discourses of the Voicinage be, and would carry but too much of Truth and Reason with them ; and by this Means, those who should have been as *Salutary Angels* to the more ignorant part of Mankind, who should have endeavour'd heartily the Propagation of eternal Truth, and to have made that Religion God had instructed them in, lovely and amiable to them, put the greatest Bar to it's Procedure, and rais'd all the Prejudices and Scandals against it that were possible. What Agonies must these unhappy Brethren lie under, when they came once to consider seriously what they had done ? How near Despair must those poor Creatures fall who consider'd that horrid Affront they had offer'd to Heaven, and that monstrous Abuse they had put upon the standing Symbol of God's Presence among them ? Sure, that Anger, that Rage, was damnable, which had its fatal Effects, not only upon suppos'd Enemies, but upon dearest Friends ; the Children then unborn would yet have reason in future Ages to curse that Anger, which must of necessity affect them too, and make them feel the Consequences of paternal Guilt : It's no uncommon Thing to see *God visit the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and fourth Generation* ; not that he'll damn the Son for the Transgression of the Father ; but this World may be a Place of nothing but Misery and Sorrows for them, tho' they labour by the severest Piety to reconcile God to themselves. Ill-gotten Estates illustrate this, which without intire Restitution, are so many Curses, as long as enjoy'd

enjoy'd by the most innocent Successors ; which Considerations should oblige Parents to that Care, as to endeavour, by Virtue and Goodness, to treasure up Blessings, not by Rapine and Cruelty to force down Vengeance upon their innocent Posterity ; yet certainly it's an Observation should make the most zealous Professors of Religion always humble. That tho' Religion, when true, advances those who embrace it to an Excellency far superiour to their irreligious Neighbours, yet there have some Sins happen'd among them which have even outdone the utmost Impieties of Heathens, since Paganism was unacquainted with such an unparallel'd Brutishness as that of the Inhabitants of *Gibeah* upon the *Levites* Concubine, since *Paul* charges the *Corinthian* Christians with such Wickedness as was not so much as named among the *Gentiles* ; and these Sons of *Jacob* had reveng'd themselves of their Neighbours with an unexampled Barbarity ; all which Divine Wisdom permits, to let us see, that it is not the Name of Religion that can secure us from the most enormous Crimes ; that the best things, abus'd and corrupted, prove the worst ; and, that only Divine Goodness, can prevent improv'd Nature itself from running out into the most violent Excesses.

We may, in short, take Notice of the Nature of that Curse *Jacob* laid upon his Sons, *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel*. A Curse which, at first View, has no such terrible Aspect ; yet, if consider'd with Relation to the Persons concern'd, it was the heaviest and most extensive Curse that could fall upon them in this World : It was to be one great Felicity of the Sons of *Jacob*, that they were to found so many distinct Tribes as they were Brothers, and to have suitable Proportions of Land divided to them ; these Lands they were to enjoy entirely to themselves, and not to interfere in one another's Portions ; so that they were to be as so many distinct Nations, and independent one upon another : Nothing, certainly, could be more glorious than such Lots ; but these were to be no Sharers with the rest in this Blessing ; but whereas their Brethren were to be as Lords or Princes, these were only to be as Peasants or Slaves, and to live in a continual Dependence upon them ; they were to feel somewhat of *Cain's* Curse, to be as *Vagabonds upon Earth*. This Imprecation hung so heavily upon *Simeon*, that *Moses*, when he came to die, and when he bestow'd his Blessing upon the Twelve Tribes, tho' he did not expressly curse this Tribe, yet he gave them no Blessing, nor so much as took Notice of them, as if they had perish'd from the Body of *Israel* by an utter Excision ; and when the Land of *Canaan* came to be divided, by *Lot*, among them, *Simeon* was forgotten, and had no particular Inheritance in the Land of Promise. *Levi's* Case was not so hard, indeed the Letter of the Curse was made good ; his Posterity too had no Proportion among the rest ; they were scatter'd thro' all the Tribes of *Israel* ; but that Dispersion was not their Loss, they were exalted to the Priesthood, an Office of the most Sacred Nature, and God himself promis'd to be, and was, the Lot of their Inheritance. The *Levites* then had no reason to envy their Brethren, nor to complain of the heavy Effects of their Fore Father's Curse : *Moses* shew'd his Blessings upon them beyond all the rest of the Tribes ; so that he made them sufficient Amends for that Curse they had before fallen under. But all this was the Effect of what I observ'd before ; of some extraordinary Expressions of Repentance for their former Sins ; the Faithfulness of *Moses*, the Holiness and Patience of *Aaron*, the Zeal of *Phinehas*, had contributed, in some Measure, to the Attonement of God's Anger against that Tribe ; but, especially, that extraordinary Zeal which the whole Tribe had shewn in the Cause of God, against their idolatrous Brethren, when they made no Distinction of Affection or Relation, but, with an impartial Severity,

Exod. 32. *consecrated themselves to the Lord, every Man upon his Son, and*

26, 29. *every Man upon his Brother*. This Action was so pleasing to God, as to take off the Weight of *Jacob's* Curse, and to satisfy all, that God

the hating Sinners could forgive, and be reconcil'd to the truly penitent : and yet that bloody Employment they were in, killing continually such vast Numbers of Sacrifices, might serve as a Memorandum to them of that Butchery their Fore-Fathers had committed upon the undeserving *Sechemites* : None could be fitter for that irksome Work, than those whole Progenitors had bath'd their

Hands

Hands in innocent Blood. But these two Tribes, thus squander'd about, could never pretend to any Regal or Supreme Power, their Condition being such as render'd them utterly incapable of exerting that Ambition which the rest of their Brethren might aim and arrive at.

And thus we have done with the Text it self, but not with the Business of this Day, to which it's so extremely applicable: We too have known *such Brethren in Iniquity*, such barbarous and bloody Wretches, the Plague of our Nation, and the Scandal of our Religion, guilty of Sins of a yet more lasting Dye, such as might justly be pursu'd with the bitterest Curses of all succeeding Generations. Let us but a little compare the Actions of *Jacob's Sons* and these, and we shall see their Crimes aggravated, in every Circumstance, with the most prodigious Additional. *Simeon* and *Lewi*, it's true, murder'd a Man, a Prince among his People, but they did it *suddenly*; they pretended not, by *Deliberation and Forms of Law*, to expose their Cruelty upon the Theatre of the World; but ours assassinated a mighty Monarch, before the Doors of his own Royal Palace, in the View of a mighty People, his Subjects, with tedious Circumstances, and long Deliberation; they challeng'd all the Censures of the World, and defy'd all the Vengeance of an angry God; they made Forms of Law subservient to their horrid Enterprize, and endeavour'd to defecrate whatever was venerable in the World, or had any Impression of Reason or Divinity upon it. *Jacob's Sons* had receiv'd an Injury at the Hands of *Shechem*, their Sister had been defil'd by him, and they were no Subjects to him, tho', as weaker Allies, they might receive Protection from him; but these flew upon their own excellent Sovereign, a Prince sure, if any deserv'd it since he who first receiv'd it, after God's own Heart; a Prince adorn'd with all those Virtues which could render Empire Sacred, or a Superior Belov'd; their Lives, their Fortunes, their All ow'd it self to the powerful Protection of his Laws; they were born his Subjects, and had the Face to call themselves *his Faithful and Loyal Subjects*, then when they made the greatest Haste to his Ruin, they had sworn Allegiance to him, if Oaths could have any Effect upon prostituted Consciences, and could expect nothing but Condemnation, both from God and Man, if they broke that holy Tye. *Charles* the First, of Precious Memory, had never injur'd them but by his Excess of Lenity and Goodness; never had deserv'd ill Usage at their Hands, but when he shew'd Mercy to impious Rebels, and spar'd their Blood who thirsted for his own. *Simeon* and his Brother cloak'd their Malice with a Shew of Religion, and prostituted a Sacrament to Revenge; but we find not that they ever endeavour'd to murder the Fame of those whom they had cut off, or charg'd him with more than what he was certainly guilty of; but those who had no such real Offence to plead; no apparent Crime to accuse their King of, resolv'd yet to *blacken* him, and to asperse his Name, so as, if possible, to throw that general Odium of the World from themselves upon him. As his great Master and Saviour was branded by the stubborn Jews with Sacrilege and Imposture, Things absolutely inconsistent with his Nature; so these represented a Monarch of unparallel'd Piety and Goodness, as a Tyrant, Traytor, Murderer, and whatsoever Hellish Tirles a Diabolical Malice could rip up. Nothing that had the Face of Religion but was abus'd to delude the Nation, and to destroy the Lord's Anointed; *Popery and Arbitrary Government* were the Cry, and the worst Principles that ever *Rome* pretended to, and the most absolute and furious Tyranny that ever Nature saw, was made use of to prevent them; what God hated, what Scripture declaim'd against, what the best Christians of all Ages, nay, what the wisest Heathens denounc'd damn'd by constant Censures and Oppositions. Those very Things were, in the late Confusions, made use of as the distinguishing Characters of *Conscientious and Well-affected Persons*. Those who durst be True to their God, Loyal to their Sovereign, Faithful to the National Laws, Regular in their Devotion, and just and Sober in their Conversations; those, were prosecuted with the most implacable Malice, as the only Bars and Letts to the Devilish Intentions of a Pack of infamous Villains and Traytors, who yet might the better bear the Severity of their Lot; since *St. Paul* himself, for some *Loyal Passages* in his Epistles, had the

the Honour to be voted a *Malignant*; A Prince under whose Government, long as devilish Spirits would give leave, nothing but Peace and Prosperity was to be heard of within our Walls and Palaces, whose Royal Vertues were the Honour, and will be the Wonder of all succeeding Ages; who would have been valu'd as the greatest of worldly Blessings, by a People wise, religious, and grateful; whose Religion could not be byass'd by the *Superstition of Rome*; nor cheared with the *Phanaticism of giddy Enthusiasts*; He who was truly a nursing Father to his Church and People, whose Prayers were along concurrent with his Laws for their Good and Welfare; such a Prince, great, so good, was hunted as a Partridge in the Mountains, driven from Place to Place by a Company of insatiate Villains, whose hellish Thirst could never be allay'd but with a full Draught of sacred Blood. His Goodness, which recommended him to the Love and Honour of God and good Men, was that Sin, the Treachery and Treason he was guilty of against the *Common-wealth of the godly*. He who sees but that Difference there is in other things between our British Presbyterians and that accursed Spawn of their Wickedness, which was snap'd at last into Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers, Ranters, Seekers, and a too more, must conclude it impossible such a Medley of Religions should ever have united Councils, but to the Ruine of every thing that had a Face of Good, the Principles of all the several Parties only agree in *Rebellions against God and His Anointed*; the same Principles they still assert, and can scarce imagine they are deliver'd from the *Lash of Penal Laws* but to do all these and yet greater Abominations, their Hopes, their Counsels, their Designs are all nothing but essential Malice; and nothing more can be expected from those who are, as the Act of Parliament stiles them, *Wretched Miscreants, pretending to the Reformation, but as far from being true Protestants as they were from being true Subjects*, and that was far enough in Conscience; But Brethren they are, *Brethren in Iniquity*, and *Instruments of Cruelty are in their Habitations*. To see Men strain at Gnats and swallow Camels, stumble at a Ceremony, and swallow and preach up and practice Rebellion; fear a white Linnen-Garment, but long after such as are dipt in Royal Blood; fear to prophane a Sabbath, but boldly murder their Sovereign, and sing their Songs of Triumph when they have done; to see them live as Traytors, and die desperate at last, and tell us, Those who died for Parricide *died steadfast in the Faith*, thank'd God for their Instrumentality in their Sovereign's Murder, and declar'd their Readiness to react the same Tragedies if able; to see such Things would make any Man say as *Jacob*, *O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, to their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united*. To recollect the Miseries this Nation then lay under, those Rapes, Murders, Prophanation of holy Things, &c. the Wounds of which so many noble Families feel to this day, would make him continue, *Cursed be their Anger for it was fierce, and their Wrath for it was cruel*. And he who remembers how the same Parties, the same nice Precisians, would but the other day have copied out their Malice to *Charles I.* upon *Charles II.* and his then Royal Brother, and Father of our present gracious Queen, as he'll be afraid to hold any Confederacy, or joyn in any Counsels with them, so will heartily pray, That God, as he has done hitherto, would still mercifully deliver our now glorious Sovereign, *ANNE*, the Grandaughter of the Royal Martyr, from all the Plots, Conspiracies, and Rebellions of such wicked and unreasonable Men, that none may take Advantage of Her Goodness to Her Ruine, or repay Her Favours with Revenge and Blood. That God would at length convince those wretched Men of their Guilt, cleanse them too from Blood-guiltiness, give them sincere and hearty Repentance, teach them Truth to God, Loyalty to their Queen, Charity to their Brethren, that those Breaches among us may at last happily be made up, our Sovereign happy, our Religion advanc'd, and our Souls saved in the Day of Jesus. Whatever Resolutions they may take, we know our Duties; and what we profess let us always maintain, true Religion, constant Allegiance, fervent Love; and what can injure us while we do what's Good? Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c.

